

XXVII.—*Letters, Announcements, &c.*

THE following letters, addressed "To the Editor of 'The Ibis,'" have been received :—

SIR,—Allow me to confirm the statement respecting the bower-building habits of the Regent-bird (*Sericulus melinus*). Several years ago (September 23, 1861) I found what I thought was the bower of the Satin-bird (*Ptilonorhynchus holosericeus*) ; but it was a very small one, and in my diary I mentioned that " the only birds seen near it were two or three Regent-birds." I thought no more of the matter until I saw some remarks on the subject by Mr. Coxen, of Brisbane [*Cf.* Gould, Handb. B. Austral. i. pp. 458–461]. During my visit to the Richmond River I determined to pay close attention to the fact, and was not long before I had an opportunity of making some observations. On the 2nd October, 1866, when returning to our camp, some twenty miles from the township, I stopped to look for an *Atrichia*, which, three days before, I had heard calling at a certain log ; and while standing, gun in hand, ready to fire as soon as the bird, which was at that moment in a remarkably mocking humour, should show itself, I was somewhat surprised at seeing a male Regent-bird fly down and sit within a yard of me. Between the two I hardly knew which choice to take—the *Atrichia*, which was singing close in front of me, or the chance of finding the long-wished-for bower. I decided on the former, and remained motionless for full five minutes, while the Regent-bird hopped round me, and finally on to the ground at my feet, when, looking down, I saw the bower scarcely a yard from where I was standing : had I stepped down off the log I must have crushed it. The bird, after hopping about it, and rearranging some of the shells (*Helices*) and berries, with which its centre was filled, took its departure, much to my relief, for I was beginning to feel uncomfortable with standing so long in the same position. Further research was not very successful ; we met with only one other bower. Wishing to obtain a living specimen of so beautiful a bird as the old male of this species, I determined to leave the structure until the last thing on my final return to Lismore, which was on the 3rd of November following. We then stopped

on our way, and, setting eight snares round the bower, anxiously awaited the result. It was not long before we heard the harsh scolding cry of the old bird, and knew that he had "put his foot in it." Having taken him out and transferred him to a temporary cage, we carefully pushed a board, brought for the purpose, underneath the bower and removed it without injury. It is now before me, and is placed upon and supported by a platform of sticks, which, crossing each other in various directions, form a solid foundation, into which the upright twigs are stuck. This platform is about 14 inches long by 10 broad, the upright twigs are some 10 or 12 inches high, and the entrances 4 inches wide. The middle measures 4 inches across, and is filled with land shells of five or six species, and several kinds of berries of various colours, blue, red, and black, which gave it, when fresh, a very pretty appearance. Besides these there were several newly-picked leaves and young shoots of a pinkish tint, the whole showing a decided "taste for the beautiful" on the part of this species.

I remain, &c.

EDWARD P. RAMSAY.

Dobroyde,
March 12, 1867.

South African Museum, Capetown,
June 17th, 1867.

SIR,—The recent acquisition of some, to me, new and rare eggs, belonging to birds which breed on some of the islands in the inhospitable Antarctic regions, induces me to forward you a few notes on them and on the habits of some of the birds of those regions.

The eggs, together with a collection of skins of several species of birds, and a fine skin of the male Sea-elephant (*Macrorhinus proboscideus*) were brought from the Crozette Islands by Captain Armson, who commands a vessel plying between this port and the islands, bringing up oil obtained from the Sea-elephants caught at the stations on that group. Captain Armson is becoming more and more enthusiastic in his researches as he experiences the pleasures of the study; and I need scarcely say his observations increase in value. Many of them I have had con-

firmed by the sailors of the vessels trading thither, who generally pay me a visit at this museum during their "liberty run" on shore.

Diomedea fuliginosa. Capt. Armson brought a single specimen of this bird's egg. It measures 4" 2" by 2" 6", and resembles, generally, that of the larger *D. exulans*, being chalky white, coarse to the touch, and of a *square* truncated form. It is also minutely pitted in an indistinct band at the obtuse end with reddish dots. This species is called "Blue bird" by the sealers, who readily distinguish it from the equally sooty Giant Petrel by the white eyelids and white mark along the bill. They say it lays only a single egg, which is very good eating.

Procellaria gigantea. The egg measures 4" 3" by 2" 8", and is of a dirty white and very rough, reminding one of that of a *Crax*. In shape it is like that of a common Goose, and is rather pointed at each end. It retains the strong musky odour of the parent, which is called "Glutton-bird" by the dealers, who state that they cannot eat the egg on account of its smell. There is only one egg laid in each nest. These birds are said to be so fearless that they congregate on the carcasses of the seals which are being cut up, and rival the men in the flensing process.

Chionis minor *. This elegant bird, the "Snow-drop" and "Snow-flake" of the Sealers, seems to abound in the Crozette Islands. Capt. Armson has succeeded in bringing several specimens alive to the Cape. A single egg obtained by him was unfortunately attacked by mice on board; but enough remains to show its contour and colour. The instant I saw it I was reminded of the eggs of *Hematopus*; and on placing it in the collection along with these, the very sailors about me were struck with the resemblance. It measures 2" 10" by 1" 10", and is of an olive-brown, unequally spotted with dark and light purple or deep brown. It is difficult to describe these light purple blotches—they appear as if they were dark-brown spots seen through a semitransparent medium or film. In shape it is

* [Mr. Layard by mistake wrote *C. alba*; but the specimen he sent to the British Museum proves that these notes refer to the smaller species, as we are kindly informed by Mr. G. R. Gray.—Ed.]

quite that of the *Charadriidae*. Both birds and eggs are esteemed good food by the sealers.

Sterna meridionalis. Skins and eggs of a Tern which I can only identify with this species. The latter measure 1" 11''' by 1" 3''', and are of a deep olive-green, with black and brown spots generally distributed but forming a zone near the obtuse end.

Procellaria æquinoctialis. The "Black Haglet" of the sealers. It lays but one egg, which measures 3" 2''' by 2" 2''', and is of a smooth, but not glistening, chalky white.

Thalassidroma melanogaster. The eggs are 1" 6''' by 1" 3''', in colour like those of the last, but their texture finer, as befits a smaller egg; their shape rounded. The birds brought flew on board. In a similar manner a specimen of *T. leucogaster* was captured, during a gale of wind, by Lieut.-Commander L. A. Beardslee, U.S. Navy, in the 'Aroostook,' 300 miles to the south-west, and presented to this Museum.

Lestris catarrhactes (*L. antarctica*, Less.). I saw this species in Table Bay, for the first time, about two years since, and directed Capt. Armson to keep a good look-out for it. This he has done with success. It lays two eggs, which measure 3" by 2" 1''', and are of a pale brown-green (like that of *L. parasitica* in our Museum), spotted, chiefly at the obtuse end, with large indistinct pale purple and brown blotches. The bird is known to the sealers as "Sea-hen," and, with its eggs, is much eaten by them.

A Gull's egg, which, so far as I can judge, in no way differs from those of *Larus dominicanus* of the Cape. Capt. Armson has not brought the skin of this species, which he, on closely observing *L. dominicanus* in the Museum, believes to be different, though some of my sailor-friends avow it is the same. Can it be *L. pacificus*, Gould?

Aptenodytes patagonicus. One bird lived till near the Cape, and then died for want of proper food. The eggs are of a dirty, pale greenish-white, covered with a thin calcareous film, which in most cases the sealers have carefully cleared off. They measure 4" 3''' by 3'', and in shape are very peculiar, tapering to the acute end very abruptly from the greatest diameter, about five-sixths of their length. A longitudinal section would not be unlike the shape of a boy's kite. The sealers say the birds carry their

single egg about with them, concealed between their feet and the plumage of the belly, waddling along on their "shins" (the tibiae). The "Rock-hoppers" (which I identify with the Falkland-Island *A. nigrivestis*) and "Jackasses" (*A. chrysocome*), are said to lay three eggs; but I somewhat doubt this, for I know that *Spheniscus demersus* lays but one. The young of *A. patagonicus*, brought by Capt. Armson, are the queerest-looking creatures for birds I ever saw. They are far more like young brown bears! The sailors' name expresses their appearance exactly; they call them "Oakum-boys"; and they are just balls of brown oakum!

Graculus carunculatus (Gmel.)? The "King-Duiker" of sealers. Eggs and skins which I refer to this species, from Prof. Schlegel's short description of it (*Mus. des Pays-Bas, Pelecani*, p. 21), have been brought. The former measure 2" 10" by 1" 11", and are of a pale green covered with the usual chalky matter, rather sharply pointed at each end, and have the shell very thick.

Diomedes exulans. Several fine eggs of this species show a marked similarity in form and colour to that of *D. fuliginosa*, as already noticed. They measure 5" by 3" 3". Capt. Armson has also brought nestlings of several ages, and a young bird, said to be about five or six days old, which is covered with pure white silky down; but the bill is the most remarkable feature, the tips of the mandibles being armed for about three quarters of an inch with obtuse tumid sheaths, as hard, white, and shining as china.

Several other birds breed on these islands, of which I hope to get eggs during the next season: now all is covered with ice and snow. Capt. Armson has brought skins of *Procellaria macroptera*, *Prion banksi* (both with their young), *Puffinura urinatrix*, and a small Teal which I cannot identify. Land-birds, he says, there are none; and the only insects I can hear of are some flies and spiders. The young of the Petrels are mere "squabs," covered with dark grey or black down, but each species is readily distinguishable by its bill.

My son writes me word that he has observed a curious habit of the Drongo-Shrike, *Dicrurus musicus*. He says, "I have been

puzzled to know why the Drongos persecute the Wagtails (*Motacilla capensis*). On watching one closely, I saw him dart from his post of observation at a Wagtail that had just caught a fly, and, after dodging him at every turn, made him give up the fly, which he carried off and devoured." This is very *Lestris*-like, and a habit I never observed in the Ceylon Drongos.

June 19th. I have just been up to see the last living *Chionis*. He is most *Hæmatopus*-like in his motions, moving with great swiftness and feeding on meat, which he holds down between his feet and tears into shreds. He is very fearless, and attacked the cats which came near him. The legs are livid brown; bill black, with a pink cere round the eye, the iris of which is black or dark horn-colour.

Some of the sealers, very intelligent men, told me this morning, in reply to my questions, that the Albatroses feed their young, all the time they are in the nest, with squids. The young birds remain in the nest till driven away by the old ones when they want the nest again. They are usually in the nest ten months, growing very slowly, but are very fat, and not at all fishy. The men laughed at the idea of their subsisting without food, as suggested in a previous notice in 'The Ibis' (1866, p. 324).

Yours very faithfully,

E. L. LAYARD.

Geological Survey Office, Calcutta,
July 17th, 1867.

SIR,—I think that all who have paid attention to the ornithology of India will be interested in hearing of the re-discovery of Franklin's long-lost *Certhia spilonota* (*Salpornis spilonota*, Gray; Jerdon, B. Ind. i. p. 382). I have collected birds during the past year around Nagpoor, and in the country to the south, about Chanda and Siroucha; and amongst other rarities I had the good fortune to obtain eight or nine specimens of *Salpornis*, most of them in good condition. They agree perfectly with the somewhat meagre original description given by Major Franklin (P. Z. S. 1831, p. 121), and with Mr. Blyth's fuller account in 'The Ibis' for 1865 (p. 48). My first specimen was killed about twenty miles south of Chanda; but the birds there

appeared to be very rare. It was much less so, though still very far indeed from common, in the great forests upon the Pranbita and Godavery rivers about Siroucha. This is five hundred miles south of Franklin's supposed original locality, and still further from Behar, whence Mr. Hodgson is said to have obtained specimens. It is very probable that the neighbourhood of the Godavery is the principal locality for this bird, and that the specimens obtained to the northward were stragglers. It is curious that Dr. Jerdon did not meet with it in Bustar, which is not very far from Siroucha and is a portion of the same great forest tract, which, indeed, stretches from the Godavery to Midnapoor, and is the largest extent of "jungle" in India.

Salpornis is not very wary. It has much the appearance of a *Sitta*, clinging to the largest trees, running round and round their trunks in all directions, and searching for insects. I found *Coleoptera* in their stomachs. In April the sexes were paired, and the birds evidently breeding; but I had not the good fortune to obtain the eggs.

I once saw, I believe, *Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*, Jerdon (B. Ind. ii. p. 628), but failed to obtain a specimen. The birds, three in number, were in open forests near Siroucha; and similar country extended for many miles around. I was looking for bigger game (to wit, Gaur), and I had no missile smaller than a No. 14 bullet with me; but I rode on horseback close to the birds, and distinctly made out the gorget and broad white supercilium. In their carriage and general appearance, mode of running, and so forth, the birds were intermediate between Courier-Plovers and Lapwings.

I thrice saw colonies of *Hirundo fluvicola*, Jerdon; but it is a rare bird. Their nests were in every case massed together, as described by Dr. Jerdon (B. Ind. i. p. 162), beneath an overhanging bank, below which was deep water. My friend Mr. Fedden, who was with me in the same district, told me that he met with a colony beneath a waterfall on the Pem Gunga river, and the birds flew in and out of their nests through the water. In every case the nests were in places which would be covered by the river during the wet season. I was told by

the natives that the birds keep about the same spot, and return again to their former nesting-place after the rains. This is highly probable; for one, at least, of the localities I hit upon was mentioned by Dr. Jerdon—that on the Wurdu river, west of Chanda. The birds appear never to go very far from their nests, and generally keep close to the river, beating for about half a mile or so up and down, not, however, keeping to the river-bed itself as *H. ruficeps*, Licht., does when breeding. I obtained the eggs, which are very similar in shape and colour to those of *H. ruficeps*, being white, sparingly spotted with claret-colour, or nearly pure white. I suspect the birds have two broods in the year—one in February, the other in April. I found many young birds in the nests at the beginning of March; while in the middle of April there were eggs in the nests, and the young of the first brood, differing very little from their parents, were flying about.

I also obtained the eggs of *Cotyle concolor* (Sykes), which have not, I think, been described. They are much more oval than those of *Hirundo*, white, thickly and minutely speckled with brown, and three in number. The nests were under rocky ledges on the banks of rivers; and I am not quite sure that they were not deserted nests of *Hirundo ruficeps*. I once found the eggs in what appeared to be a deserted nest of *H. fluvicola*.

My other most valuable captures were two specimens of *Cyornis tickellæ*, Blyth (B. Ind. i. p. 467), one of them, a female, precisely similar in colouring to the male, and *Cotyle rupestris*, which, according to Dr. Jerdon (*tom. cit.* p. 166), is not known to have been previously shot in the plains of India. I found small companies of them around a rocky hill in February. I also obtained the following birds, which had not previously been found so far to the south:—

Circus cyaneus ! ; a fine specimen, killed at Chanda.

Pericrocotus erythropygius ; several specimens, Nagpoor.

Muscicapula superciliaris ; one specimen, Chanda.

Saxicola opistholeuca ; one specimen, Nagpoor.

S. atrogularis ; three specimens, Nagpoor.

Emberiza huttoni ; four specimens, two at Nagpoor, and two west of Chanda.

While the following, also amongst my collections, have not hitherto been met with so far to the north or to the east:—

Leucocerca leucogaster (Cuv.) (*L. pectoralis*, Jerdon), Chanda.

Iora zeylanica, }
Prinia socialis, } Chanda.

Spizalauda deva, west of Chanda.

Perdicula erythrorhyncha, near Siroucha.

I have still a few species which I have been, as yet, unable to determine—amongst them a *Saxicola*, apparently new to India, and a *Muscicapula* (?); but I have had but little time for comparing them since I returned to Calcutta.

I see that Mr. Wallace, in 'The Ibis' for 1864 (p. 103), says that he never found ants in the stomach of a *Pitta*. I shot three specimens of *P. bengalensis* one day in the beginning of May, and examined the contents of their stomachs. One had fed partly upon the large black ant, so common in the Indian jungles; the other two had fed entirely upon "white ants." I have not seen *Termites* mentioned before as forming part of the food of these birds. I also found black ants along with *Coleoptera* in the stomach of a solitary specimen, *Oreocætes cinctorhynchus*, which I shot in the Chanda forest.

W. T. BLANFORD.

SIR,—I beg leave to trouble you with a few remarks relating to three very interesting papers in the last number of 'The Ibis,' those by Professor Baird, Captain Beavan, and Mr. E. Newton.

Amongst the birds supposed to be identical in Europe and North America, Prof. Baird includes *Aquila chrysaetus*, *Pandion haliaetus*, *Brachyotus vulgaris*, *Nyctea nivea*, and *Surnia ulula*. I have had the opportunity of examining American and European examples of all these species, and feel convinced of their being specifically identical on the North-American and European continents.

The Norwich Museum possesses an extensive series of Ospreys from various parts of the world; and I have no hesitation in expressing my belief that the species is identical, not only on the coasts of North America and of Europe, but also on those of Africa, Asia, and Australia.

It appears to me, however, that Ospreys from the Atlantic coast of North America are, on the average, of somewhat larger size than those from the Pacific coasts. I may add that *Syrnium cinereum*, though not included in the list above referred to, is certainly identical on the two continents of Europe and North America.

Professor Baird includes in the same list *Archibuteo lagopus*, with reference to which I wish to observe that I have examined a large number of species of Rough-legged Buzzards, obtained both in Europe and in North America, and I have also kept alive for several years specimens obtained in Labrador, as well as English examples, and the conclusion at which I have arrived is, that the true *A. lagopus* does not occur in America, and that the American birds which most resemble the European species are, in fact, only the paler examples of *A. sancti-johannis*.

I have for many years made a point of examining, as carefully as I have been able, as many specimens as possible of the Peregrine Falcon from all parts of both hemispheres where that widely-spread species occurs, and I have found myself entirely unable to detect any constant specific difference that may be relied on between the three supposed species, *Falco peregrinus*, *F. anatum*, and *F. nigriceps*.

In this case, as in that of the Osprey, specimens from the Pacific coast (where this Falcon ranges from Vancouver's Island northward to Chili southward) appear to be of a slightly smaller average size than those found in the countries of North America lying towards the Atlantic Ocean; but I cannot think that there is sufficient variation in this respect to admit of specific separation.

South of Chili, in the southern part of Patagonia and about the Straits of Magellan a really distinct race does occur, closely allied to *F. melanogenys* of Australia, from which, indeed, it only differs in its slightly larger size. It is worthy of remark that the three southern races of Peregrine Falcons, viz. this Magellan race, to which, I believe, no specific name has yet been given, *F. melanogenys*, of Australia, and *F. minor*, of South Africa, all agree between themselves, and differ from the true *F. peregrinus* in having much narrower spaces than occur in

that bird, between the dark transverse abdominal bars which characterize the adult plumage of all these Falcons.

Before leaving Prof. Baird's paper I wish to add a remark on the subject of *Falco islandicus*. I have never had an opportunity of examining an adult specimen of this Falcon from any locality westward of Greenland; but I have seen several immature birds from Labrador and from the Hudson's Bay Territory, and have invariably found them of a darker and more fuliginous hue than specimens of a corresponding age from Iceland and Greenland.

This peculiarity, which is well represented in Audubon's plate of the immature example procured by him in Labrador, is, I think, deserving further investigation by any naturalist who may have the opportunity of making it.

With reference to the avifauna of the Andaman Islands, I wish to mention that I have several times examined the two living examples of *Spilornis* sent from those islands to the Zoological Society, and I think I may say, confidently, that they do not belong (as suggested by Capt. Beavan) to *S. cheela*, but to the more southern species, *S. bacha* (Daudin), *S. bido* (Horsfield), which inhabits the islands of Ceylon, Sumatra, and Java, and the southern extremity of the Malay peninsula.

In regard to the birds of the Seychelles Islands, I think it may be worth mentioning that the Norwich Museum possesses an authentic Seychelles specimen of *Tinnunculus alaudarius*, which may possibly be the bird which was mentioned to Mr. Newton under the local name of "Papangue." I may add that this specimen (an adult male) is the only example I have seen of the species from any locality south of the equator.

J. H. GURNEY.

8 August, 1867.

SIR,—The geographical distribution of the European races of the genus *Cinclus*, on which Mr. Salvin has thrown much light in his model-paper in your January number, is still very perplexing; nor is it simplified by the fact that I have recently ascertained that the Dipper, which breeds in the Pyrenees, is *C. melanogaster*! Mr. Salvin conjectured that the Pyrenean

bird would prove to be *C. albicollis*; but this does not appear to be the case. My specimens, an adult and an immature one, were taken on the 27th of July last, near Eaux-Chaudes, and agree precisely with the identical Scandinavian examples examined by Mr. Salvin.

I am, Sir, &c.,

H. B. TRISTRAM.

Greatham, 20 August, 1867.

SIR,—In the last number of 'The Ibis' for this year (p. 295), I observe that Mr. Blyth has given a new title, *Loriculus edwardsi*, to the common little Parrakeet of Ceylon, hitherto known as *Psittacus indicus*, Gm., or as *P. asiaticus*, Lath. With due deference to Mr. Blyth's high authority on ornithological subjects (and no one more fully respects it than I do), I regret that I cannot concur in the reasons given by that gentleman for rejecting, in this case, the older titles and adding a new one to our already over-loaded list of synonyms.

Edwards first figured and described the Ceylon species (i. pl. 6), from a specimen in spirits "brought from some Dutch settlement in the East Indies." From his descriptions and plate, which Brisson notices as "une figure exacte," it is evident that the Ceylon bird and no other served as the subject. Brisson, describing from the plate, but without having seen the species (for the two asterisks at the commencement of his diagnosis are wanting), founded on it his *Psittacula indica*. He quotes no other authors. Linnæus (Syst. Nat. Ed. XII.) omitted all notice of Brisson's description, and, under *P. galgulus*, merely refers the reader to Edwards's plate ("Conf. Edw. t. 6") *P. galgulus* having been solely based by him on Edwards's plate 263, fig. 1. Latham (Syn. i. p. 311), under the title of "red and green Indian Parrot," inserts the species on the authority of Brisson and Edwards; while Gmelin (Syst. Nat. i. p. 349), quoting those three authors only, gave the species the title of *P. indicus*. Latham, a little later, 1790 (Ind. Orn. i. p. 130), while quoting Gmelin, Brisson, Edwards and himself, entitled it *P. asiaticus*. Both Gmelin and Latham therefore gave their names to Edwards's species, which was undoubtedly from Ceylon. Mr. Blyth seems fully to admit that Edwards's plate 6 refers to the Ceylon bird,

and yet he says "this race is wholly peculiar to Ceylon, and therefore is neither the *Psittacus indicus* of Gmelin, nor *P. asiaticus* of Latham." Now as this form is not found in India proper, we may follow Messrs. Horsfield and Moore (Cat. E. Ind. Mus. ii. p. 628) and suppress Gmelin's title, otherwise the oldest; but what reason is there for not adopting the next in succession, *P. asiaticus*, Latham?

With reference to the same paper you will perhaps permit me to add that *Lanius lucionensis* is a Linnæan title originally given to a Philippine race which is totally distinct from that of Ceylon, as I have already endeavoured to show in your Journal (*antea*, pp. 212 *et seqq.*); that *Dicrurus edoliiformis*, Blyth, is *D. lophorhinus*, Vieill. (N. Dict. d'Hist. Nat. 752), founded on *le Drongup* of Levaillant (Ois. d'Afr. iv. pl. 173), the type of which is still preserved at Leyden, where it was shown me by my amiable and most learned friend Professor Schlegel; that *D. leucopygialis*, Blyth, is *Oriolus furcatus*, Gm. (Syst. Nat. i. p. 395), founded on Brisson's *Icterus cauda bifida* (Orn. ii. p. 105), which in its turn was founded on Seba's "*Turdus niger mexicanus*" (Locupl. Rerum Nat. Thes. i. p. 102, pl. 65. fig. 2), and referred by Wagler (Syst. Av. fol. 23. p. 12) to *D. cerulescens* (Linn.); and that *Temenuchus albofrontatus* (Layard), 1854, must give way to "*Pastor senex*, Temm. Mus. Lugd.", Bp. (Consp. i. p. 419). Examples in the *senex*-state of plumage, that is with the entire head grey, appear to be rare; for in a considerable series of Ceylon specimens of the species I have only met with one as described by Bonaparte. Its Bengal origin, as given in the 'Conspectus,' is of course erroneous.

I have, &c.,

Chislehurst, Kent, August 25, 1867.

WALDEN.

SIR,—I was unfortunately absent from the meeting of the Zoological Society held on the 8th of May, 1866, when the first specimen of *Sylvia aquatica*, Lath., known to have been obtained in England was exhibited; but in November last, when on a visit to Mr. Borrer, I had an opportunity of examining it, and was at once struck with its similarity to a bird in my own collection

which I had received from the neighbourhood of Loughborough, and which I had put aside to be named.

On my return home I reexamined this example, and then felt little doubt that it was a *S. aquatica*. To be sure, however, that I was not mistaken, I sent it for confirmation to Mr. Tristram, and that gentleman thereupon wrote to me as follows:—"There is no doubt about your *Salicaria aquatica*. It is not in full plumage, and therefore may be a bird of the year. The mature bird in breeding-plumage has not the spots on the breast and flanks. There is no difference between the sexes."

It only remains for me to add that my specimen was obtained near Loughborough, in Leicestershire, during the summer of 1864, and was forwarded to me by a friend, under the impression that it was a Grasshopper-Warbler. When we consider that *S. aquatica* is known to breed on the opposite shores of Holland, and is found in the marshes about Lille and Dieppe, we are only surprised that it is not a more frequent visitor to Great Britain than it appears to be. On the other hand its general resemblance in size and colour to other well-known species, when seen at a little distance, would naturally cause it to be overlooked.

I am, &c.,

Kingsbury, Middlesex, August, 1867.

J. EDMUND HARTING.

Yatesbury Rectory, Calne, Sept. 3, 1867.

SIR,—In the last number of 'The Ibis' (p. 374) you did me the honour of reviewing a paper which I read some time since at Salisbury, before our County Natural History Society.

I had no expectation or desire that my unpretending paper should occupy so distinguished a position as to receive notice from 'The Ibis;' but as it has been so honoured, I trust you will allow me in self-defence to assert that, if your reviewer had taken the trouble to read my paper before he criticised it, he would have discovered that the theory I enunciated as held by Dr. Baldamus was precisely the opposite to that which he attributes to me. So far from saying that "Dr. Baldamus alleged that the Cuckoo had any power of laying an egg of what colour she pleased," I distinctly say (p. 12), after quoting from Dr. Baldamus this theory as upheld by some advocates, "but Dr. Bal-

damus rejects this opinion, and contends for the older view (viz. that the same Cuckoo lays eggs of one colour and markings only, and so is limited to the nests of but one species); and this he proves by personal experience and observations;” &c. &c.

I need not refer to the remaining portion of the review in question, though again the instance adduced of an eye-witness having seen the Cuckoo first lay her egg on the ground, and then carry it off in her beak for deposition in the nest of some older bird, which is quoted from a recent German periodical as a novel fact, might, had the reviewer read my paper, have found sufficient precedent in the interesting story of the charcoal-burner in the forest of Thüringia, as recorded by Dr. Baldamus in ‘Naumannia,’ 1853, and as detailed by me in full in the paper in question. As I had taken considerable pains in translating as accurately as possible the whole of Dr. Baldamus’s paper on this most interesting subject, which to me has a singular fascination—as I conceive I had thoroughly made myself acquainted with Dr. Baldamus’s views before I wrote my paper—and as I was especially careful not to mar the question by any opinions of my own, but merely to present the theory of the eminent German ornithologist for the consideration and examination of others, I confess I am anxious not to be misrepresented, and so I confidently appeal to your sense of justice to set me right by publishing this reply in your next number.

I am &c.,

ALFRED CHARLES SMITH*.

* [We are exceedingly sorry that our good friend should have to complain that his meaning had been misrepresented in our pages, and gladly insert his disclaimer of the opinion attributed to him. The writer of the notice in question, however, in justice to himself wishes it to be mentioned that he *did read* Mr. Smith’s essay, and the impression left on his mind was as stated in the notice. With regard to instances of the Cuckoo being seen to lay its egg on the ground, we must take leave to remark that the very circumstantial account given by an eye-witness which is mentioned in our last number (p. 375) appears to us to stand as a matter of evidence on a very different ground from the story of the nameless Thuringian charcoal-burner, who did not himself tell it to Dr. Baldamus, but to a third person, Herr Mädcl, from whom the Doctor received it (Naumannia, 1853, p. 315, note).—ED.]

Mr. Blyth has been good enough to communicate to us the following extract from a letter received by him from Allan Hume, Esq., C.B., dated " Bareilly, May 14th, 1867 :"—

"I have just received a copy of 'The Ibis' for January 1867; and two points in your notes on Dr. Jerdon's work drew my attention.

"1. As to the nidification of *Phyllopneuste rama* (*suprà*, p. 24), Jerdon is *not* right. This very year, on the 1st of April, at Etawah, my friend Mr. H. E. Brookes (well known to both Messrs. Hancock and Tristram as an ardent ornithologist) shot the male on the nest; and I saw the bird, nest, and eggs within an hour, and visited the spot later. The nest was placed in a low thorny bush about a foot from the ground, on the side of a sloping bank in one of the large dry ravines that in the Etawah district fringe the river Jumna for a breadth of from one to four miles. The nest was nearly egg-shaped, with a circular entrance near the top. It was loosely woven with coarse and fine grass, and a little of the fibre of the "Sun" (*Crotalaria juncea*), and very neatly felted on the whole interior surface of the lower two-thirds with a compact coating of the down of flowering grasses, and little bits of spiders' web. It was already about five inches in its longest, and three inches and a half in its shortest diameter. It contained three fresh eggs, which were white, very thickly speckled with brownish-pink, in places confluent and having a decided tendency to form a zone near the large end. Three or four days later we shot the female at the same spot.

"2. *Melanocorypha torquata* (*suprà*, p. 49). I have generally shot this Lark on the upper part of the Ganges and Jumna Duáb; and this year Mr. Brooks and myself shot several at Etawah (halfway between Cawnpore and Agra). I agree with you that the Indian bird is certainly not *Alauda bimaculata*; but I think that this latter is larger and clearly distinct from *Calandrella brachydactyla*, and I do not think that *M. torquata* is so much smaller than *M. calandra*. However, of the latter I have no specimens, and I therefore subjoin measurements of *M. torquata* taken in the flesh, maxima and minima of some eight specimens. Length 7" to 7½". Expanse 14" to 15".

Wing $4\frac{7}{16}$ " to $4\frac{7}{8}$ " (second and third primaries longest, the first very minute). Tail of twelve feathers, its length from vent 2" to $2\frac{3}{16}$ ". Tarsus $\frac{15}{16}$ " to 1". Mid toe $\frac{5}{8}$ " to $\frac{11}{16}$ "; its claw $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Hind toe $\frac{7}{16}$ ", its claw $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{9}{16}$ ". Bill, straight, $\frac{5}{8}$ " to $\frac{11}{16}$ "; from gape $\frac{3}{4}$ " to $\frac{13}{16}$ "; width at gape $\frac{7}{16}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The wings when closed reached to within $\frac{1}{2}$ " of end of tail.

"*Alaudula raytal*, as described by Jerdon, is very common along the sandy banks and dunes of the Jumna and other large rivers in the upper provinces, and, like *Esacus recurvirostris*, is found only in such localities.

"I have often procured and preserved fine specimens of the *Pelecanus crispus* in the upper provinces. Jerdon does not include it."

Mr. Blyth informs us that he has requested Mr. Hume to favour him with good adult specimens of all the species of Pelican that he can procure, calling his attention to the remarks on the Indian species of this genus (pp. 178 *et seq. anteà*).

We have to record the deaths of Prince MAXIMILIAN of WIED, and Mr. JOHN MACGILLIVRAY. The Prince, who was born in 1782, had more than fifty years since travelled in Brazil, where he formed a large ornithological collection, which many tourists on the Rhine will remember to have seen at his unpretending residence at Neuwied below Coblenz; for its doors were always thrown open with the greatest liberality to visitors. His Highness subsequently travelled in North America with the same object. Mr. Macgillivray, the naturalist employed in the voyages of the 'Fly' and 'Rattlesnake,' had for more than ten years been living in Australia, and at the time of his death was meditating an expedition to explore the interior of New Guinea. He was son to Prof. William Macgillivray, author of a well-known 'History of British Birds' and many other works.